

# Transforming digital services requires trust, efficiency and innovation

By **Mohamed Azmi Mohd Rasheed Khan** - November 29, 2023 @ 3:58pm



(FILE PHOTO) Malaysia is set to revolutionise its digital landscape with the implementation of the National Digital Identity initiative under the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint, which was launched on Feb 19, 2021. -NSTP FILE/ASYRAF HAMZAH

IN a landmark move, Malaysia is set to revolutionise its digital landscape with the implementation of the National Digital Identity initiative under the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint, which was launched on Feb 19, 2021, aimed at guiding the growth of the country's digital economy.

The objective of the initiative is to create a Verifiable Platform of Trust, providing secure and efficient digital identity verification for Malaysian citizens aged five and above.

The National Digital Identity (NDI) is not intended to replace MyKad but to complement it, enhancing security and efficiency in online transactions.

The drive for digital identity is rooted in the country's commitment to advancing its digital economy and fostering a seamless online experience for its citizens.

With 90 per cent of government services already accessible online and 61.6 per cent penetration of e-commerce users, the groundwork for a digital transformation has been laid.

The NDI initiative aligns with various strategic plans and a comprehensive approach to digital integration.

Several countries have successfully implemented digital identity initiatives, providing valuable lessons for us.

India's Aadhaar system, covering 99 per cent of its adult population, stands as a prime example. Nigeria and Brazil have also made significant inroads in digital ID adoption.

These success stories underscore the importance of widespread adoption, addressing the lack of identity documentation, and streamlining government processes.

We can draw on these experiences to navigate potential challenges and ensure a smoother implementation.

As the NDI initiative becomes a reality, its impact on everyday Malaysians and the government's digital services is poised to be substantial.

For users, the implementation promises a smooth, safe and data privacy-guaranteed online experience. Time and cost savings compared to traditional counter transactions are additional benefits, enhancing the overall convenience of digital interactions.

The government stands to benefit from improved efficiency in service delivery, cost savings and a boost in trust and safety for online interactions.

The transition to a national digital identity also aligns with the changing dynamics of a post-pandemic world where online interactions have become integral to work, learning and daily activities.

The initiative addresses the need for a contactless, efficient and secure digital environment.

As the government works towards its goal of establishing Malaysia as a regional digital and startup hub, the NDI serves as a foundational step, fostering innovation and inclusivity.

However, the move is not without its challenges. The existing fragmented systems and lack of standardisation in identity verification pose significant hurdles.

The risk to user data privacy and the inconvenience of managing multiple passwords for various online services are pressing concerns.

To address these issues, the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has presented a detailed study, highlighting the needs for a cohesive and standardised digital identity verification platform.

One other key concern is the security and privacy of user data. To build trust and confidence, robust measures must be put in place to safeguard sensitive information.

Malaysia can learn from Estonia, which implemented a secure digital identity system in the early 2000s.

The integration of multi-modal biometrics, emphasising security and privacy in design and adherence to international standards can be pivotal in ensuring a safe and secure digital ecosystem.

In conclusion, Malaysia's journey towards a national digital identity represents a significant leap towards a digitally integrated and secure future.

The fast-track implementation, inspired by successful models from other countries, showcases the government's commitment to embracing technological advancements.

As the initiative unfolds, it is crucial to prioritise data security, adhere to international standards and communicate the benefits effectively to ensure a seamless transition for both the government and the citizens.

This move is not just about transforming digital services but also shaping a future where trust, efficiency and innovation go hand in hand.